

O 011559Z OCT 96
FM AMEMBASSY BANJUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3758
INFO ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
USDAO DAKAR SG
USCINCEUR VAHINGEN GE//ETCC//
UTAI5 RAMSTEIN AB GE//INOW//
USEU BRUSSELS 0388
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY DAKAR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANJUL 002394

DEPT FOR AF/W
ALSO FOR AID
DAKAR PASS TO PRAIA
DAKAR FOR RSO, POLOFF
LONDON FOR YOUNG
PARIS FOR MORAN
USEU FOR NAHAS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 9/30/01
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SUBJECT: GAMBIAN ELECTION WRAP UP

REFS: A) BANJUL 2383; B) BANJUL 2377; C) BANJUL 2373;
D) BANJUL 2362; E) BANJUL 2277

11. CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE DOUGLAS ROHN FOR REASONS
1.5B&D.

12. (C) SUMMARY: CHAIRMAN YAHYA JAMMEH WON THE 26 SEPTEMBER GAMBIAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WITH A 56 PERCENT MAJORITY. PRIMARY CHALLENGER OUSAINOU DARBOE RECEIVED 36 PERCENT, AND TWO MINOR CANDIDATES SPLIT THE DIFFERENCE. THE ELECTION PROCESS AS PLANNED AND MANAGED BY THE PIEC WAS PEACEFUL, CALM, AND EFFICIENT, A FACT WHICH PLEASES MANY GAMBIANS. THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD WAS MARKED BY A POLICY OF INTIMIDATION AND HARASSMENT BY GOTG SECURITY FORCES THAT PROBABLY INFLUENCED THE VOTE. THE GOTG BELIEVES THAT IT HAS MET THE WEST'S REQUIREMENT FOR AN ELECTION, AND WILL TAKE A VERY SOUR VIEW OF ANY CRITICISM OF THE JUST CONCLUDED ELECTORAL PROCESS. END SUMMARY.

13. (C) THE ELECTORAL PROCESS: AS DESCRIBED IN REF B, ELECTION DAY IN THE GAMBIA WAS QUIET, CALM, AND PEACEFUL. ACCORDING TO ANDREW LADLEY, A NEW ZEALAND LAW PROFESSOR WORKING WITH THE PROVISIONAL INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION (PIEC), ASIDE FROM A FEW INCIDENTS, THE MOST SERIOUS OF WHICH WAS THE MOSQUE AFFAIR NOTED IN REF B, THE ELECTION WAS A MODEL OF EFFICIENCY AND TRANSPARENCY. IN HIS VIEW, THAT FACT ALONE HAS ADVANCED THE CAUSE OF DEMOCRACY HERE. HE WAS PARTICULARLY PLEASED WITH THE SUCCESS OF THE ONE-DAY PRE-ELECTION COOLING OFF PERIOD.

14. (C) VOTING PATTERNS: THE CHAIRMAN WON WITH A 56 PERCENT MAJORITY. HE DID WELL IN MOST PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. JAMMEH PAINTED DARBOE AS THE MANDINKA CANDIDATE (DARBOE AND FORMER PRESIDENT JAWARA ARE MANDINKA, AS ARE ABOUT 45 PERCENT OF GAMBIANS). JAMMEH, WHO HAD BASED MUCH OF HIS CAMPAIGN STRATEGY ON CONDEMNING AND OVERCOMING MANDINKA TRIBALISM AND, INDEED, TRIBALISM IN GENERAL, DID WELL AMONGST THE MANDINKA, WINNING UP TO 30 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN HEAVILY MANDINKA AREAS. HE CAPTURED MORE THAN 75 PERCENT IN AREAS DOMINATED BY HIS NATIVE JOLA TRIBE.

15. (C) THE PIEC: THE COMMISSION ADMINISTERED THE ELECTION WELL. EFFECTIVE SAFEGUARDS WERE IN PLACE TO ENSURE THE FAIRNESS OF THE VOTE AND THE COUNT. ON THE TECHNICAL SIDE, THE PIEC DESERVES KUDOS. WHEN CALLED UPON TO CONTROL VARIOUS GOTG ABUSES, HOWEVER, THEIR PERFORMANCE WAS SIGNIFICANTLY WEAKER. THEY DID PROTEST THE GOVERNMENT MEDIA'S OBVIOUS SUPPORT FOR

JAMMEH (REF E), AND THEY TALKED TO THE ARMY, POLICE, AND NIA ABOUT DEMONSTRATIONS OF SUPPORT FOR JAMMEH. WHEN THE OPPOSITION CONTINUED TO BE BANNED FROM THE MEDIA AND AS THE SECURITY FORCES CONTINUED TO SHOW OBVIOUS SUPPORT FOR JAMMEH, NO FURTHER ACTION WAS TAKEN. AS VICE-CHAIRMAN BISHOP JOHNSON SAID AT THE 21 SEPTEMBER, PRESS CONFERENCE, "WE SHOWED THE YELLOW CARD, BUT NOT THE RED." HE EXPRESSED HIS FEAR THAT TOO MUCH PRESSURE ON THE GOTG, "WOULD RESULT IN CHAOS."

¶6. (C) INTIMIDATION AS A POLICY - WE HAVE SPOKEN TO NUMEROUS GAMBIAN CONTACTS AND WITH ZOE TEMBO, THE ZAMBIAN DIRECTOR OF THE AFRICAN CENTRE FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES, WHO COORDINATED THE INTERNATIONAL OBSERVER EFFORT. BASED ON WHAT THEY HAVE TOLD US, AND ON WHAT WE SAW IN THE BANJUL AREA THE LAST FEW DAYS OF THE CAMPAIGN, THE GOTG WORKED AT INTIMIDATING VOTERS. ACCORDING TO TEMBO, FOR EXAMPLE, SOLDIERS IN JAMMEH'S ENTOURAGE TOLD VOTERS IN MANY PLACES THAT, "THERE IS A WAR COMING IF YOU DO NOT VOTE FOR JAMMEH." SHE SAID THAT THE MILITARY ESCORT, WHICH WAS LARGE AND ARMED WITH HEAVY WEAPONS, TOLD VOTERS THAT, "WE HAVE ONE BULLET FOR EVERY VOTE FOR DARBOE." ON THE LAST DAY OF CAMPAIGNING THE ARMY SHOWED UP WITH AN ARMORED VEHICLE AND TWO TWIN FORTY MILLIMETER ANTI-AIRCRAFT CANNONS AT JAMMEH RALLIES IN THE BANJUL/KOMBOS AREA. TEMBO ALSO CLAIMS THAT THERE WAS AN NIA PLAIN CLOTHES AGENT AT EVERY POLLING PLACE, AND THAT THE VOTERS KNEW WHO THEY WERE AND WHY THEY WERE THERE.

¶7. (C) TEMBO, A VETERAN OF MANY AFRICAN ELECTIONS COMMENTED THAT THE VOTING WENT TOO PEACEFULLY. SHE SAID THAT, "THE PEOPLE ACTED LIKE ROBOTS." SHE ALSO NOTED THE LACK OF REAL JOY AT JAMMEH'S ELECTION AMONG NEARLY EVERYONE EXCEPT SOLDIERS AND SOME YOUNG PEOPLE. A PHENOMENON SHE SAID THAT SHE HAD NEVER EXPERIENCED IN THE AFTERMATH OF AN AFRICAN ELECTION.

¶8. (C) JAMMEH'S CAMPAIGN STRATEGY WORKED. HE HAD SPENT TWO YEARS TALKING ABOUT THE CORRUPTION OF THE PRECEDING THIRTY. LAWYER DARBOE HAD DEFENDED SOME OF THE MINISTERS TRIED BY THE GOTG FOR CORRUPTION. THE APRC TRIED TO TAR HIM WITH THE BRUSH OF GUILT BY ASSOCIATION. THE PEOPLE DID NOT WANT TO GO BACK TO THE JAWARA YEARS. JAMMEH HAS DONE A LOT IN COMPARISON WITH THE JAWARA GOVERNMENT. HE HAS BUILT 16 SCHOOLS, IS BUILDING A HOSPITAL AND A NEW AIRPORT TERMINAL, AS WELL AS A TRIUMPHAL ARCH. HE HAS A STRONG BASE OF LEGITIMATE SUPPORT.

¶9. (C) ON THE OTHER HAND, THE OPPOSITION, IN A VERY SHORT TIME FRAME, WITH ALMOST NO TV OR RADIO TIME, AND WITHOUT ACCESS TO THE GOVERNMENT RESOURCES THAT JAMMEH SO FREELY USED, RECEIVED FORTY-FOUR PERCENT OF THE VOTE.

¶10. (C) COMMENT: THE APRC WAS NOT GOING TO LOSE. THEY DREW ON EVERY RESOURCE AVAILABLE TO THEM. THE INTIMIDATION AS WELL AS THE VIOLENCE (REF A) AT THE END OF THE CAMPAIGN SHOWED THAT THEY WOULD DO WHATEVER THEY THOUGHT THEY HAD TO TO WIN. NOW THEY BELIEVE THAT THEY HAVE SATISFIED WHAT THEY SEE AS A WESTERN IMPOSED REQUIREMENT TO HAVE AN ELECTION. THE PIEC, INVOKING THE SPECTER OF RWANDA AND OTHER FAILED STATES, AVOIDED FORCING THE GOVERNMENT TO EITHER PLAY FAIR OR CALL OFF THE ELECTION. THE GOTG WOULD HAVE IGNORED THEM ANYWAY. GAMBIAIS ARE GENERALLY SATISFIED THAT THEY HAD A PEACEFUL ELECTION. THE WERE AFRAID, THE GOTG PLAYED UPON THAT FEAR, AND IT WORKED.

¶11. (C) THE GOTG WILL SEE ANY FURTHER COMMENTS FROM THE WEST ABOUT AN UNLEVEL PLAYING FIELD AND A POLICY OF INTIMIDATION AS SOUR GRAPES. NO MATTER OUR PROTESTATIONS THAT OUR ONLY GOAL WAS A FREE AND FAIR ELECTION, THEY HAVE ALWAYS PERCEIVED US AS SUPPORTING

DARBOE (REF D). END COMMENT.

ROHN